

STILL MOTHER

Written by
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FADE IN

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

A silver CD player blasts old school Reggae tracks. Beside it, a recently ironed school uniform is folded neatly on the surface of a small dining table with three chairs.

Well-worn black heeled boots and a couple pairs of kid's trainers lay separate on a half empty shoe rack next to the front door. A polished pair of school shoes dries off-rack on a plastic bag.

Though the clock on the wall's tick is muted under the music, it displays the time as 4:14 AM.

Two long shadows, cast from the kitchen onto the open-plan stairs, move about as though dancing.

A tall and skinny woman, KERRY MIMNAUGH (46), steps backwards out of the kitchen with an arm extended behind her holding a lidless bottle of vodka. Her other hand holds someone back in the kitchen.

Kerry's laughing, lost in the music, while vodka staining her nose and cheeks with blush. Her pale blue and bloodshot eyes echo an absence of thought, of concern, of anything outside herself.

With a firm shove Kerry moves aside and her daughter, NICOLE HOWL (12), stumbles out of the kitchen.

Nicole turns on a penny, moving her long Afro hair out of her anger-flooded brown eyes. An expression that's strange on a face so young.

She attempts to take the bottle from Kerry.

Kerry raises it above her head, out of Nicole's reach, like some kind of game.

Nicole gives up, tears welling in her eyes as she spits unheard and heartless words at her mother's muted ears.

Kerry begins to dance, she spins a little, shakes her hips, all of that; until - the music stops!

Shocked, Kerry turns to look at her CD player but it's *smashed to bits* on the floor, right beside her now *broken bottle of vodka*. And - the front's door wide open.

A door upstairs slams shut, startling Kerry. She turns around to look upstairs.

INT. UPSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Kerry walks off the stairs and towards a bedroom door.

"NICOLE'Z ROOM - NO ANYONE'Z" is written in pink on a hanging sign.

Kerry attempts to open the door but can't.

She knocks it.

No response.

Kerry bangs on it. She tries the handle again but the door remains shut.

Kerry takes a breath. She steps back with a little drunken wobble and with her full strength she runs at the door, barging in off its hinge.

Kerry falls through into a darkness.

CUT TO:

EXT. VAST OCEAN - CONTINUOUS

Kerry lands hard onto the door but now it's soaking wet and gently rocking.

Slowly, she peers up and realises -

She's floating in the middle of an endless and dark ocean on nothing more than her daughter's bedroom door.

A singular but full moon in a starless sky is her only source of light.

Lost and alone, Kerry lies there, accepting it.

She peers over the door's edge into the strange sea, into her own strange rippling reflection.

With a steady cupped hand, she gently scoops the water up and pours it back.

She repeats this action once more and without a word, Kerry enters the unknown depths.

INT. KERRY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Fragile yellow light beams through the crack in the curtains painting the magnolia room with melancholy.

The air glints with dust and carries a Pigeon's cooing in through the open window.

Lying on her bed, side-long and curled up to her head in sheets, Kerry opens her eyes.

She immediately sits up startled.

Kerry inhales deeply and looks around, notably displeased when she realises she been had-over by her own mind, again.

Two palms pressed to her forehead as she pulls the hair off her face and rubs the sleep from her eyes.

INT. KERRY'S BEDROOM - SOON AFTER

Kerry lies on her other side now, staring blankly at her closed bedroom door.

Beside her, two boxes of medication lie on a bedside cabinet next to an used ash tray, a disposable lighter, a 20 pack of Richmond Superkings and a near-empty glass.

A half drank litre bottle of water warms on the floor beneath. Peering out from behind it, an empty bottle of vodka.

Though basic, her room is neat and orderly. Bed, side-table, drawers, Argos wardrobe, TV.

Hanging from Kerry's bedroom door is a slim-fitting black silk dress; nothing too fancy. Behind it, a full length black leather jacket.

Kerry's look could burn a hole through the outfit as she unconsciously chews her bottom lips.

EXT. COUNCIL ESTATE - LATER

Summer light sun bathes the maisonettes, chipped-paint gates and cracked tiles of Spriggin's Estate into looking a half decent place to call home.

Wind carries a soundscape of its residents, as though the estate itself is alive.

Kerry's stomping down the road in all black attire, complimenting nothing but herself while smoking a cigarette.

Kerry is her cigarette, tall and slim, her head-top dyed a burning red.

Shades on, ears pierced and rings of silver on every finger. Black nail polish matching her eyeliner. A witch's aura.

Ahead of her is the local shop, adverts and discounts stickers stuck to nearly every inch of its wide windows.

Kerry flicks her half smoked fag at the window on approach and pushes through the door.

Bing-Bong.

INT. SHOP - CONTINUOUS

A silver haired Hindi man called UNCLE (50's) sits behind the counter doing a crossword puzzle. He doesn't move or look up despite Kerry's entrance.

She glides past him without a word of welcome, straight to the wine rack.

Uncle looks over now and at the sight of *her* he stands.

Just as Kerry's about to pick her bottle he clears his throat, obnoxiously.

She turns to him, one hand still on the bottle.

He crosses his arms and raises his brow - at the *wrong* woman.

Kerry, dead behind the eyes, just slowly grates the bottle off the edge of its shelf and puts it back in place.

She stalks him, right around the back of the counter and not until she's an arms length away does she exchange a *look*.

This look saying all that she need it to as she takes a fresh pack of 20 Richmond *and* a litre bottle of Smirnoff.

Uncle's dumbfounded. All he can do is pull out a pen and his little green folder; "I.O.U's" written on its surface.

EXT. STREET - SOON AFTER

With a blue plastic bag for her bottle and new pack in her pocket, Kerry stomps on to her next destination.

EXT. PARK - SOON AFTER

Turning the corner to the sound of children playing, Kerry stops dead in her tracks.

Surrounded by maisonettes, the estate's park hosts three brats playing together.

A lone mixed race boy, KIERAN (7), sits on the bench outside the park. He's just swinging his knees and staring at the ground.

EXT. BENCH - CONTINUOUS

A tall and slim shadow cast over the young lad makes him look up. His big brown and innocent eyes are dry but his bottom lip hangs over sorrow.

Kerry's looking down at him, shades off now for eye contact.

He looking up at her and shrugs.

There's a understanding, something shared between the two with no need for communications.

Kieran flies at Kerry, embracing her long legs with a tight hug.

While patting his shoulder Kerry looks around, searching for witnesses. She finds none but the children.

They've stopped playing and are looking at Kerry and Kieran.

Kerry gestures for them to come over and then she points at Keiran.

The kids leave the park and approach, understanding Kerry's request.

One of them, a girl named SOPHIE (6), gently pulls on Kieran's shoulder.

Kieran doesn't look around, doesn't let go.

One of the two boys comes up and pulls Kieran's shorts down revealing his underwear. The three of them run away laughing.

Quick as he can, Keiran pulls his shorts up and runs after them all.

Kerry smiles at that.

Slowly, her smile fades away as does the children's laughter.

She puts her sunglasses back on and walks away.

INT. HALLWAY - SOON AFTER

The front door opens, streaming light into the hall as Kerry crosses the threshold of her home. She closes the door and the hall darkens around her.

Kerry stands there, tensing as though a ghost just blew death down her spine.

Plastic bag in hand. Her trembling hand.

With her eyes closed, a hand clenched tightly on the bag's handle, Kerry just breathes for a moment.

Her other hand counts all four finger from index to pinkie and back again, on repeat.

On her fourth lap of counting, her grip loosens, her counting ceases and Kerry opens her eyes. They're glossy with sadness.

She puts the bag on the table, takes out the bottle and heads into the kitchen.

The sounds of glass on a laminate worktop, of the fridge opening and closing echoes from her chore.

Kerry walks back to the hallway table and pinches the bag's arse, pulling it so her fags fall out.

They fall out and slide off table to fall onto the floor.

Kerry sighs as another straw lands on her tender back.

Another deep breath.

She bends down onto her fours and crawls around the side of the table, and sees -

The smashed silver CD player, dusty now. Some of its buttons are missing or dislodged. It's still plugged in the wall, CD lid open, "Old School Reggae Trackz" written on the pirated CD within it.

Kerry stands up with the stereo. Puts it on the table. She closes its lid and she presses play.

Scratchy noises come from it as the disc spins behind the transparent lid. "Buffalo Soldier" actually begins to play perfectly through this busted stereo.

It makes Kerry scoff. It makes her smile. It makes her cry.

FADE OUT